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DRAFT:RMB:djm
31 July 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: CIA Views Concerning Conversion of U-2 Aircraft for Carrier Operations

In the course of discussions between the Navy and the Air Force, and between this Agency and each of these two Services, on the matter of U-2 conversion for carrier operations some misunderstanding may have arisen as to the position of this Agency. Accordingly, the following summary of our position, as it has been expressed in the successive phases of these conversations, has been formulated.

1. The possibility of the conversion of the U-2 for carrier based operations was first studied in the CIA and discussed very informally with several cleared Naval Officers early in 1957. As a result of that study the CIA concluded that there would be little or no gain in coverage of the Soviet Bloc through carrier operations beyond that obtainable from land bases in Western Europe, Turkey,

25X1A [] and Japan. Therefore, the AQUATONE Project would require a carrier based capability only if:

(a) ~~it~~ were deprived of one or more of its already established bases, or

(b) Could not secure permission to stage through a

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The value of such a capability to this Project would be ~~that~~ as insurance against any contingency which would render land bases unavailable.

g. Our assessment of the political situation at ~~this~~ ^{that} same time led us to conclude that the risk of loss of one or more of our bases as a result of unforeseen political developments was very considerable, and that insurance against this contingency would therefore be most valuable. It appeared, therefore, that insurance against this contingency would be most valuable. In April, therefore, the possibility of developing a carried based capability was discussed more formally with the Navy and this Agency indicated that it would be favorably inclined toward participation in a joint project with the Navy to employ such a capability. It was made clear, however, that no such program could be undertaken without Air Force concurrence since:

a. The Air Force has been a full partner in AQUATONE since its inception;

b. The Air Force has furnished without reimbursement all GFE used in the Project and large quantities of consumable supplies; and

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c. It has been understood that aircraft and all other equipment utilized in the Project would be turned over to the Air Force when it became surplus. The Agency did agree, however, that Lockheed would be asked to undertake an engineering study of a carrier version of the U-2 immediately.

3. During the subsequent two months three political developments occurred which modified the Agency's estimate of the availability of land bases. 25X1C



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As a result of these three developments it appeared that alternate bases would be available on short notice to AQUATONE should any of the three presently occupied have to be evacuated. Mainly because of these developments this Agency reached the conclusion that there was little need for insurance against the risk of loss of one or more land bases. Late in June this revised estimate was presented to the Navy and the Agency indicated that on the basis of this estimate the expenditure of Agency funds to develop a carrier based capability could not be justified.

4. In summary, the present position of the Agency is as follows:

a. A carrier based capability would add little if anything to the

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coverage of the Soviet Bloc obtainable by AQUATONE.

b. The availability of alternate land bases provides a fair degree of insurance against the contingency of unfavorable political developments.

c. The great flexibility of a carrier based capability, along with the added insurance against the non-availability of needed land bases, would be a real advantage especially in the event of any requirement for reconnaissance outside of the Soviet Bloc. This Agency would therefore be happy to see this additional capability developed.

d. Aircraft and other equipment cannot however be diverted ultimately from the Air Force for carrier operations and ~~ultimately~~ turned over to the Navy without the full concurrence of the Air Force.

e. If the decision is made to proceed with the carrier conversions, this Agency will participate with the Navy in such operations on the same basis as it has with the Air Force in land based operations.

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